

Homecoming by YumeArashi

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Canon Compliant, Corpses, Gen, Grief/Mourning, Minor Character Death

Language: English

Characters: Barbara "Barb" Holland, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-04-26

Updated: 2017-04-26

Packaged: 2022-04-02 00:29:46

Rating: Mature

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,493

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Once Will is safe in the hospital, Nancy has one thing left to do

Homecoming

Nancy watched Jonathan and his mother hugging Will, crying, ruffling his hair as the sickly boy smiled weakly back. For a moment Jonathan caught her eye, his joy fading a little at the reminder that there was no happy ending for her, but she smiled reassuringly and turned to go.

Steve fell into step beside her. "I heard your folks say they're gonna stay so your kid brother can visit. Need a ride home?" he offered.

"Thanks, Steve, but I can't go home yet. There's one more thing I have to do."

"Yeah? Whatever it is, the offer's still open. I got nowhere to be."

"You don't want to be where I'm going," Nancy said quietly. "Mike said that the monster's dead, and that it – or El – killed most of the people from the lab. It should be as safe as it ever is to get to the portal and go back to the Upside Down."

"The Upside Down?" Steve all but screeched, stopping in his tracks. "Where that thing came from? Why the *hell* would you do that?"

Nancy's lips thinned. "I'm not asking you to come, Steve."

"Well I'm sure as hell not about to let you do it alone! What if you get into trouble again? Byers won't be there to save you, someone's gotta. Just tell me there's a good reason, okay?"

"This is something I have to do," Nancy insisted, still quiet but as unyielding as stone. "I understand why the chief and Jonathan's mom couldn't bring Barb home, I really do. They had to get Will out of there as fast as possible, and they couldn't carry both of them. But I can't leave her there." Her voice choked on a sob. "I've *been* there, Steve, and I can't leave her in that place."

"Shit," Steve swore softly, wrapping his arms around Nancy and pulling her close. "I gotta admit that's a pretty damn good reason. But you sure I can't talk you out of it? We don't know if there are

more monsters and..." he hesitated a moment before plunging ahead, "I don't know what happened to her, but you don't wanna see that, Nance."

"I don't. But I owe it to her. If I hadn't left her alone, maybe she'd still be alive."

"And maybe you'd both be dead," Steve hugged her tighter.

"Maybe. But even so, that wasn't how I wanted to leave things with her. The last words I ever said to her...that's not something you say to your best friend. And I can't change that, I can't ever make it right, but I can do this. And when we can have a proper funeral for her, then I can say goodbye, and tell her I'm sorry for how we ended."

Steve stroked her hair as she cried. "Okay. Okay, Nance," he took a deep breath. "We're doing this. Would you consider at least asking the Chief for help? I mean, he's already done it, seems like he'd be a good guy to ask."

"What if says no and forbids us from going?" Nancy asked anxiously.

Steve shrugged. "Then we run like hell down to my car and drive like hell over to the lab. You think we can't outrun that old fart?"

"I think that 'old fart' has police radios he can use to get someone to cut us off."

"Then we steal some bikes and go off road. C'mon, Nance, please? He probably feels bad he had to leave her. You can't deny we could use someone to watch our backs, someone who knows the way."

"Fine," Nancy sighed, and headed back to the waiting room. "Chief? Can we talk to you for a minute?"

Hopper hoisted himself stiffly out of the chair, grumbling that he was getting too damn old for this shit. "Yeah, kid?" he asked, stepping out into the hallway.

"We need your help," Nancy said cautiously.

“We need to go to the Upside Down,” Steve said glumly. “Can you show us how?”

“Or at least tell us?” Nancy bit her lip.

Hopper rubbed a hand over his face, looking like he wished he were anywhere else. “Kid, I have had the longest goddamn day and all I want to do is go home and sleep for a year. For the love of god, why?”

“We have to bring Barb home. I can’t leave her there.”

Hopper’s face softened. “Look, I’m sorry. We would have brought her if we could have. I feel bad about it, I really do, but our priority had to be Will.”

“I know, and I don’t blame you. But I can’t leave her. Her mom doesn’t even know.” She saw Hopper flinch minutely, and pressed the point. “She doesn’t believe that lie about Barb running off any more than I do, she’s sure something awful happened, but she’ll always wonder. She’ll never ever know what really happened to her daughter unless we make this right.”

“All right, all right, kid, Jesus. That’s a low damn blow, I want you to know that.”

“So you’ll help?” Steve interrupted hastily.

“I’m not letting a couple kids run off there alone, dead monster or no, that’s for damn sure. Did you even know you need hazmat suits?”

Nancy’s eyes widened. “What?” she squeaked.

“See? You and your half-cocked...”

“No, you don’t understand, I’ve already been there. What did it do to me?” she demanded.

Hopper swore in an educationally creative manner. “Listen, the second - the *second* - that we get back you are gonna have the docs check you out, and no argument. Understand?”

“Yeah, okay,” Nancy said, shaken.

“I’m sure you’ll be fine,” Steve reassured her. “Will might be sick but he’s gonna be okay, and he was there for days while you were in and out in minutes.”

“Listen to your boyfriend, kid. Now c’mon, if all those goons were wiped out at the school, there’ll never be a better time. Let’s head to the morgue and grab some IDs and some keys off those bodies.”

They exchanged a nervous look as he headed off down the hall, muttering something that sounded a lot like ‘I’m going to hell’.

Then Nancy’s mouth firmed and she headed after him. “We’re going to need a way to transport her.”

“Wheelbarrow,” Hopper grunted.

“Wheelbarrow?” Nancy frowned.

“That seems...undignified,” Steve ventured.

“You got a better idea?” Hopper asked, heading into the morgue and rummaging in the drawers, ignoring the bodies draped with bloody sheets.

Steve put an arm around Nancy, looking as though he need to comfort himself as much as her. “Well...what about those?” he pointed to the gurneys the bodies were on.

“We’d have a hard time getting one out of the hospital without anyone noticing,” Nancy said doubtfully.

“No, no, he’s got something,” Hopper mused. “That place was a medical lab as much as anything, I bet we’d be able to find one. We’ll bring a wheelbarrow just in case, but I bet we won’t need it. Good job, kid, nice to know there’s a brain under that fancy hair.”

**

The lab looked deserted as they drove up – the gatehouse abandoned, few vehicles in the lot or lights in the building, and absolutely no

people or movement. Hopper casually drove right through the lowered arm of the gate in a shower of splinters, to the delight of Nancy and Steve, and pulled up right in front of the building.

Hopper was right, it wasn't difficult to find a medical gurney complete with sheets. They wheeled it to the basement, and suited up as best they could in the hazmat suits from what Hopper remembered of how it was done.

Then they went back to the Upside Down.

Hopper led the way, as wary as if there were still monsters lurking in wait. Steve and Nancy stuck close, staring wide-eyed at the horrible, twisted reflection of their hometown.

When they reached the library, Hopper held up a hand. "You two wait in the doorway. This isn't something anyone should see, much less a couple of kids and *definitely* not a couple kids who were friends of hers. No arguments."

Neither Nancy nor Steve argued. Nancy turned to watch the empty decaying street, while Steve put his back to hers and kept an eye on the ruined library as Hopper made his way past the rows of shelves toward the organic mass.

After a few minutes, Hopper headed back toward the doors, pushing the gurney with its sad burden under the slime-stained sheet. He pushed the sheet back enough to show Nancy a lock of red hair. "It's really her."

Nancy bit back a sob. "Thank you."

"Thank me later, let's get the hell out of here."

It was tougher coming back than it was going in, the now-laden gurney's wheels struggling with the spongy ground and thick coating of ash, but between them they kept coaxing it along.

Between them, they brought Barb home.